

Message from the Chief

Chief's Memo – July 10, 2006

Time flies when you're having fun! It has been six months since becoming the Director of the California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection (CDF) and I must tell you that the view from inside CDF is quite extraordinary!



I have spent most of my 32-year public safety career working in local government. The transition to State Service in August 2004, after being appointed California State Fire Marshal by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, was not as difficult as I had expected. I have experienced less bureaucracy and more willingness to help get the job done at the state level than one might expect in a politically-appointed position. I'm only the third director of CDF with a professional fire protection background rather than coming from forestry, land management, environmental, or other resource management backgrounds.

Like many fire departments, CDF -- which turned 100 years old in 2005 -- is rich with traditions and customs handed down from generation to generation. However, I find from inside CDF an organization that is willing to fight for valued traditions, shed itself of outdated ones, and remains open to change, new ideas, and growth.

Once thought of primarily as a "forestry and wildland firefighting organization" CDF has evolved over the years into a full-service, all-risk, highly professional fire department which still provides the statewide leadership in forestry, as well as statewide leadership in fire and life safety through the Office of the State Fire Marshal. I believe this diversity of mission is the strength of CDF.

However, I have also observed that the CDF mission and identity issues also have the potential of becoming CDF's greatest vulnerability. The department struggles with perception issues of "mission creep" and "branding problems" from the Legislature and local government, as well as having its own internal identity issues. Recently, several legislative bills have tried to address this identity issue by renaming the department to "Cal Fire," much like the former California Department of Transportation and Public Works is now known as "Caltrans." CDF is looking at this and other issues of "branding" to address the many partnerships with local government.

CDF is an organization with diverse statutory responsibility and authority, varied organizational values, statewide geographical locations, broad stakeholder interests, and significant operational demands.

Besides the statewide wildland firefighting mission in State Responsibility Areas (SRA), CDF provides all-risk services to local government through various contracting methods in 36 of the 58 counties, and is mission tasked by the Office of Emergency Services (OES) to respond to statewide mutual aid and to natural and other human-caused disasters. CDF, in conjunction with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), also maintains a statewide system of inmate camp crews available to respond to emergencies as needed. CDF's firefighters, fire engines and aircraft respond to more than 5,600 wildland fires and more than 300,000 other emergencies each year.

CDF has stewardship for over 31 million acres of California's publicly and privately owned wildlands and is the lead agency responsible for commercial timber harvest plans, managing the State's forests, fire prevention through vegetation management, fostering healthy forest management practices, encouraging urban forestry, protection of significant archeological sites, and protecting the environment (watershed, habitat, and species) through a variety of strategies.

CDF is also responsible for statewide fire, panic, and life safety through the Office of the State Fire Marshal. The State Fire Marshal has numerous statutory responsibilities, which also became the responsibility of CDF as part of a consolidation of the two state agencies more than 10 years ago. Statewide Fire Training, Fire Engineering, Fire & Life Safety, Code Development and Regulation, Pipeline Safety, Arson Bomb Investigations, and regulation of many industries are just a few of the Office's statutory responsibilities.

The real strength of the organization is the employees of CDF. During the past six months as I visited 18 of the 21 CDF Units. From personal observations I believe that CDF employees are professional, hard working, and dedicated. While it is true that CDF is facing a significant number of retirements, the leadership remains strong, even in the face of a number of demoralizing issues, such as pay inversion, different pension plans than rank and file, aging infrastructure and equipment, and budget deficiencies.

Recently, as I was passing through Sutter Creek, I stopped by a local CDF fire station, unannounced. It was 100 degrees. The fire captain and firefighters had completed a four-mile run and were conducting a wildland training evolution involving protecting two structures with one fire engine. This example of preparedness and training appears to be the norm within CDF.

The union leadership is also a strong point of CDF. CDF Firefighters are a knowledgeable and influential voice in Sacramento and in the fire service. Represented by Aaron Reed & Associates, one of the most widely respected

lobbying firms in Sacramento, CDF firefighters are committed to safety for their members and to fair and equitable wages, hours, and working conditions. So far, I have found all of the labor organizations representing their members in CDF to be solution oriented. CDF has recently reached tentative agreements with CDF Firefighters and with SEIU. The relationship with CAUSE, who represents the employees within the Office of the State Fire Marshal, has also been extremely positive.

Some of the strengths that I have seen from the inside are visible to others from the outside, as well. Take, for example, a team of world-class firefighting pilots, air operations personnel, air maintenance staff, and support for ground forces that includes 23 Grumman S-2T 1,200 gallon air tankers, 11 UH-1H Super Huey helicopters, and 14 OV-10A air tactical aircraft. From 13 air-attack and nine helitack bases located statewide, aircraft can reach most fires within 20 minutes.

Also take, for example, a partnership between CDF and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) that provides 39 Conservation Camps statewide that house nearly 4,000 inmates and wards. Through these cooperative efforts CDF operates 196 fire crews year-round. These crews are available to respond to all types of emergencies including wildfires, floods, search and rescue, and earthquakes. When not responding to emergencies, the crews are busy with conservation and community service work projects for state, federal, and local government agencies. Fire crews perform several million hours of emergency response each year, and more on work projects. In addition, the program provides structure, training, and a sense of pride for inmates who may never have experienced this kind of teamwork in their personal lives, at a cost to the state far less than prisons. Inmates are specially screened to be eligible for the camp program.

Additionally, there are the nine statewide Incident Command Teams (ICTs) that, in partnership with local government, provided by CDF to manage large-scale wildfire emergencies. Once activated, the teams provide experience and expertise to manage any statewide emergency operations or jointly with local government to assist in the command and control functions for local disasters.

During the past six months there have been some internal successes for CDF that may have garnered no media or external attention, but are none-the-less important to CDF. A few include:

- Riverside County extended their contract with CDF to continue to provide county fire services for an additional 3 years. Riverside County is the largest of CDF's local government contracts. The contract and strengthened relationship came after the decision to maintain CDF's air operations at Hemet-Ryan Air Attack Base.
- The State Budget process resolved a budget deficiency that CDF has had for several years. In fact, Governor Schwarzenegger has provided over

\$150 million dollars for improved fire protection measures for CDF during his administration. The Governor has also signed an Executive Order that will give CDF the flexibility it needs to better manage large-scale wildfire emergencies.

- A continuity and succession plan has been approved and funded to address the increase in retirements, and the resulting need for expanded academy training.
- CDF is in the process of expediting the replacement of fire engines and emergency crew transports over the next three years to modernize its fleet.
- CDF is just completing a helicopter replacement study to modernize its fleet for all-risk emergencies.
- Infrastructure funding will allow for an increased rate of replacing fire stations, emergency command centers, communications equipment, as well as academy improvements.
- Supervisors and managers now have the same pension plan as rank and file, and a solution to the pay inversion issue is in sight. CDF is beginning to see a number of experienced retired chiefs seeking re-instatement.
- A two-year tentative agreement with CDF Firefighters will result in more firefighters and better working conditions for those employees.

Finally, CDF is in the beginning phase of a re-organization that is intended to improve customer and employee satisfaction, streamline organizational decision-making, improve communication, foster organizational succession planning, fully integrate the Office of the State Fire Marshal, and empower leaders to improve operational effectiveness and efficiency.

That's my view from inside CDF. The view looks good...and is getting better!

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Grijalva', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ruben Grijalva, Chief
Director / State Fire Marshal

Fire Protection Automation

Battalion Chief Ed Applegate, CDF ROSS Project Manager, will be visiting each command center during July and August. Chief Applegate will be traveling with the Federal ROSS Project Manager, Julie Vogan. They are endeavoring to gather and share information about ROSS that will be helpful to all the ECCs. The travel schedule and topics for discussion have been sent to the ECCs and Unit Chiefs. They would like to speak with as many ROSS users as possible, including the center manager or assistants. This is an opportunity to exchange ROSS information. Please have your questions ready.

All CDF ECCs were sent instructions regarding entering their FDID Numbers (Fire Department Identification Number) into their CAD Program. The FDID information is a key component for CAIRS (California All Incident Reporting System). Each incident entered into CAD will automatically transfer into CAIRS for the report. The more information in CAD, the more information that can be pushed into the CAIRS report and the less information field personnel will have to enter. The FDID number will be entered and tied to the jurisdiction of each incident in CAD.

Southern Region

The news media from four TV stations rode in Fresno County Fire Protection District engines (the Schedule A contract for Fresno-Kings Unit) over July Fourth. To kick off the efforts, the Unit did a live segment about safe usage of "Safe and Sane Fireworks." The cameras recorded footage showing CDF firefighters in action. This footage will be shown on upcoming news programs.

Bob Wirtz, Administrative Officer for the Southern Region, retired effective June 30, 2006. He had worked in this capacity for four years and did a remarkable job interfacing with Sacramento and the Units as the Region coordinator for Management Services functions.

Aviation Management

The Aviation Safety Action Group held its quarterly meeting during the first week of July. The Operational Assistance Review -- disseminated by AMU to all CDF Air attack and Helitack bases -- provide checklists inspired by USFS-established documents and are designed to allow individual bases to assess their readiness and work towards improved base standardization.

Crew Resource Management training will be enhanced through additional classroom training and the use of standard crew briefs, as developed jointly by aviation safety and aircrew members. Flight Data Monitoring techniques are to be employed on a trial basis to determine effectiveness for long term trend analysis as they pertain to extending the useful life of the S-2T.

Office of State Fire Marshal

An extremely busy couple of weeks for personnel at the OSFM thanks to the Fourth of July. Thanks to Hugh Council and Vickie Sakamoto for the countless media interviews were handled.